Black Rock City's only alternative newspaper

Piss Clear

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No, really, we *like* Burning Man!

adrian's rant

Considering some of the negative comments we got about a few snarky things we printed in Thursday's issue, I feel the need to clarify something: We *like* Burning Man. Really, we do. Don't get the wrong idea. Just because we like to bitch about stuff doesn't mean we don't like being here. Au contraire. In fact, Black Rock City is far and away my favorite city in the world.

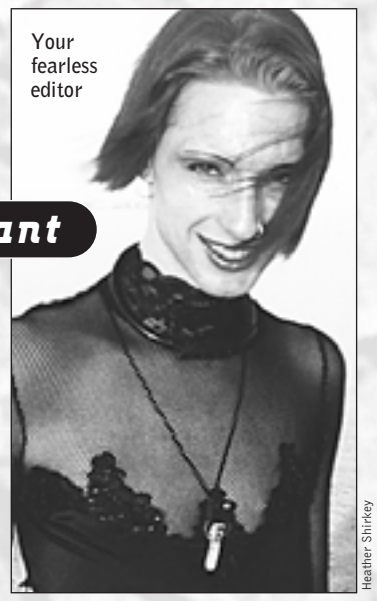
It's just that it gets so fucking hot here. And it's dusty and dirty and dry. And we never get to sleep until really late. And then the sun wakes us up way too fucking early, and then we sit around all day, unable to sleep, unable do much of anything except drink water and apply moisturizer. So needless to say, we get a bit cranky.

But would we really be anywhere else on Labor Day weekend? Probably not. Because let's face it, being out here still beats Real Life by a long shot. We may be cynical, we may be sarcastic, and we may be obnoxious, but we do it all out of love. And we love the Burning Man festival.

We even love the people who run the Burning Man Project. They really are wonderful human beings, and we really need to thank them for making this year happen. Because I know we didn't do shit to help.

You know who has helped make Burning Man continue to happen though? Considering all the rude comments we've seen directed at anyone with a videocamera here, the answer may surprise you. Believe it or not, the mass media is partially responsible for the continued existence of Burning Man. It's true!

You may not like them being here, but they're helping to spread the word to other freaks and artists and kindred spirits out there, people who would otherwise never know that Burning Man exists. And the beauty of it is that Burning Man is starting to enter the mainstream consciousness, *without going mainstream*. Think about it this way: sure, lots of people now know about what we do out here in the desert every Labor Day weekend. But a lot of people also know about things like the Rainbow Gathering, but you don't see millions of people clamoring to go to *that*. I mean, come on! Most people are way too used to being coddled to be able to put up with the shit you need go through to get your sorry ass out here to the middle of nowhere. So don't worry about it when your mom says, "Oh yes, I saw that Burning Man thing on CNN."



Your fearless editor

Heather Shirkey

Hell, I'm glad the media is here. Why? Because I'm a big media whore, and like to see myself on television—come on all you media crews, come and interview me! I give good sound bite! No, really, I like the media here because they're getting people from all over the the country—hell, even from all over the world—to come out here to take part in this wonderful festival. Otherwise, it would be just another party full of in-the-know San Francisco hipsters. And hell, I get that every week.

Speaking of parties, remember when Burning Man parties happened only once a year? This past year in SF, they happened practically *every week*. With so many going on, I was very nearly burnt out on Burning Man before I even got to the playa!

Still, I'm glad I'm here. Remember when you were a kid and you played House? Well coming out here is like playing City. And with both this year and last, that City is starting to resemble Manhattan more and more, considering how dense and packed in everything has gotten. Remember when Black Rock City was sprawled out in a big wide circle, and it took three hours just to walk from one end to the other? Those were the L.A. days of Burning Man.

Of course, those were also what I like to call The Dark Years of Burning Man. '95 and '96. It was still fun, but it definitely got a bit scary there at times, what with all the drunk yahoos driving around the playa like idiots, tossing beer cans around and yelling at women, "Show us yer tits!" Yeah, a lot of people didn't get it.

But somehow, all that's changed. Last year's new "no driving" rule seemed to solve most of the problems, and this year seems to be going just as swimmingly. Oh sure, there are still a few yahoos here—but most of them are yahoos who *get* it. And that's a beautiful thing.

You know what else is a beautiful thing? Seeing people wearing *Piss Clear* stickers. (How's *that* for a segue way?) We've still got a few left, so if you want 'em, stop by the *Piss Clear* World Headquarters, located on the north side of Black Rock City in the village of Disturbia. We promise we're not really as bitchy and mean as some of the rants and articles in this issue make us sound—even the really obnoxious ones, like Swirly Rat Jr.'s tirade on why he's proud to be a spectator, or Ritlin Scott's piece on what you can do with all your garbage, or our interview with someone who came to Burning Man with nothing and survived! We've even got some *useful* information in this issue, such as Hurricane Linda's tips on how to deal with Post-Playa Syndrome, which most of you will be experiencing come next week. And for once, we even have some halfway-decent haiku, courtesy of Gavin Heck.

Thank you for reading *Piss Clear*, and enjoy the rest of your stay here in sunny, dusty, beautiful Black Rock City. (That didn't come off as *too* insincere, did it?)

Random quote

"Can I walk with you guys? I lost my friend a while ago, and can't find her. Her name's Nevada. So I've been walking around, looking for her all over the place, yelling 'Nevada! Nevada!', and people are like 'Yeah, you're in Nevada. Shut the fuck up.'"

— unknown girl at Burning Man, overheard by Charles Lucas

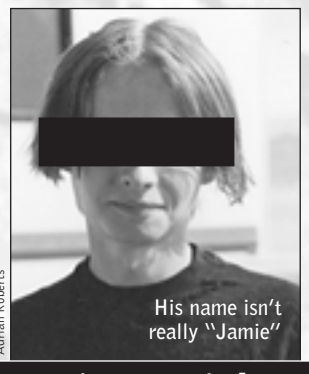
"I showed up with nothing and survived!"

by ADRIAN ROBERTS

interview with a freeloader

By now, you've heard the litany. Hell, it's even spelled out explicitly in the Burning Man Survival Guide: "You must bring all necessities to the desert: food, shelter, water, fuel—everything you need to survive."

But... what if you don't? Could you still survive—comfortably—if you showed up out here with nothing? You could if you were Jamie Conway.*



Adrian Roberts

His name isn't really "Jamie"

You see, Jamie is one of those jaded, cynical sorts. And while he was notably wowed by his first Burning Man experience, back in 1996, he felt like he had missed out on the days when Burning Man had a bit more of a, shall we say, survivalist edge to it. "I read the Survival Guide," says the cute, roguish, 24-year-old San Franciscan. "And I had this impression that Burning Man was going to be this dangerous sort of place. And when I got there, it turned out to be no big deal at all."

Over the next year, I would run into Jamie at parties around San Francisco. Inevitably, our conversations would turn to Burning Man. One night, during a particularly lengthy drunken chat, we ended up discussing the increasing "urbanization" of Black Rock City. I argued that Burning Man had remained admirably uncommercial, and that it was still a fairly challenging environment to be in. He vehemently disagreed. "I bet you I could show up at Burning Man with nothing but the clothes on my back and a pocket full of cash, and survive just fine!" I scoffed, daring him to try it. Drunkenly, he accepted my dare.

It should have ended there, but it didn't. "It was a crazy idea," he admits, "And of course it ran counter to everything the Burning Man Project tells you. But that was exactly why I wanted to try it—just as sort of big 'fuck you' to prove that I could do it."

Realizing that Jamie was serious, I pitched him an idea: we would drive him out to Burning Man. But after that, he was on his own. He would arrive in Black Rock City on Friday morning with nothing, save for the clothes on his back, and $100 in cash. If he pulled it off, I'd write this article. And if not, well...

"It was kind of scary at first," recalls Jamie. "I mean, I figured that if worst came to worst, I could always come crawling back to the *Piss Clear* camp and you guys could just laugh at me."

But as it turned out, Jamie had little to worry about. In fact, with his guile and charisma, he survived just fine. "The first thing I realized was that I had to play it off cool," he says. "I never let on that I had no place to camp, or that I had no water or food. I would have been doomed had anyone thought that I was a Clueless Newbie."

Basically, Jamie survived by being a very charming leech. "I needed to get water and a water bottle, that was my first priority. I noticed a camp having trouble setting up their shade structure, so I offered to help. They were using those big long rebar stakes, you know, the ones that you cover with 2-liter plastic bottles? I asked them if they had any extra bottles, since my water bottle had cracked. They gladly offered me one, and even filled it up with water for me. After that, I ended up kicking back for a while, enjoying a beer with them in the shade."

"It was a crazy idea, and it ran counter to everything the Burning Man Project tells you. But that was exactly why I wanted to try it."

"The thing I discovered quick," offers Jamie, "Is that if you're just friendly and nice to people, they'll offer you stuff. Water, sunblock, Pop Tarts, whatever. I thought that I'd have to go to the Frontier Store in Center Camp to buy stuff, but I never did. Instead, I just hung out with people, making them laugh, and then I'd ask, 'Hey, I'm sorry, can I bum some water? I'm almost out and I'm camped way the hell on the opposite end.' And it was usually no big deal. I don't think anyone felt like I was imposing."

Okay, so getting and drinking water wasn't a problem. But what about food? Jamie laughs. "Who the hell eats out in the desert?" Still, you've got to eat sometime. Jamie acquiesces. "Okay, I admit it. At night, I lived off of grilled cheese sandwiches from Bianca's Smut Shack. And during the day, I ate hamburgers from that crazy Flash guy, or Papa Satan, or Daddy Love, or whatever the hell his name is. Plus, there was the occasional trail mix hand-out from whoever I was hanging with. I didn't have to mooch food at all."

Okay, so food and water is taken care of. What about shelter? "During the day, I would just wander from theme camp to theme camp, hanging out underneath various shade structures. I really dug that tropical theme camp, with the mist tent set-up. I napped once in the Fandango camp—they had an awesome parachute tent, but no one was really using it. So I think they were kind of excited to see someone crashed out in there all day.

"I didn't really sleep much at night—go figure. On Friday night, I *did* fall asleep on one of the couches at Bianca's, before the dawn woke me up. On Saturday night, I ended up buying a hit of Ecstacy off this cute boy-girl couple, who I ran into again later that night at the opera. Of course, the opera went on for fucking *ever*, and we were all X-ing pretty hard at that point, so we left and went back to their camp, where I had a real cute, mushy scene with them in their tent."

So Jamie prostituted himself in order to find sleeping accommodations? "Well, I wouldn't put it *that* way!" he replies, scoffing at me. "I would have slept with them anyway, even I had gone out there with a fully-provisioned RV!"

When I mention that he must have been pretty skanky, having lived in the same clothes for four days straight, Jamie laughs. "Yeah right! I went to the hot springs every day! I don't know how I would have survived without them. I would soak my clothes and them let them dry, while I hung out in one of the pools. Then I'd bum some sunblock off somebody, and I was good to go."

Periodically, over the course of the weekend, I would run into Jamie, who always snarkily assured me that he was surviving in Black Rock City just fine, thank you very much. My only worry was, how was he going to get home? "Oh, puh-leeze!" replies Jamie. "Getting a ride home was *easy!* All I had to do was ask around a bit, and pony up some gas money. I ended up going back to San Francisco in an RV full of really cool drag queens!"

So would Jamie recommend this sort of "show up with nothing" Burning Man experience to anyone? "Kids, don't try this at home!" he laughs. "There were definitely some moments where I was worried," admits Jamie. "Not knowing where I was going to scam my next water, or where I was going to sleep. It's definitely not the way to go if you're not very sociable, or if you can't deal with uncertainty. But I had a ton of fun. I think I'll probably try it again next year."

Black Rock City denizens, you have been warned.

*Names have been changed to protect the not-so-innocent.

8 little Burning Man pains

by HURRICANE LINDA

Not being able to go anywhere without water.
Always feeling sticky slathered with sunblock.
Not being able to find your camp at night.
Sleep guilt — what if you miss out on something cool?
Warm beer.
The nagging fear that some lawsuit will make this year the last.
Constantly wondering: "Why didn't I start coming *[x]* years ago?"
Teva tan.

Playa lingo: The lexicon of Black Rock City

Dust rhino
Small dust tornado that carries off your tent in a storm. *I guess those three-inch metal tent stakes were just no match for that dust rhino.*

Dust slugs
The dirty glob of mucus that appears across your front teeth after a dust storm. *There I was, charming this girl when I had a dust slug the whole time!*

Dusty munchkins
The semi-feral children that run loose around the playa. *On Sunday we ran out of food, but fortunately a dusty munchkin came by and "fell" into our fire.*

Mirage
A theme camp that looks cool from far away, but actually sucks when you get up close. *We saw this camp with blinking lights and techno music, but it turned out to just be a mirage. There was hardly anyone there.*

One-eyed shit
Any annoying person with a videocamera, who sees the entire Burning Man festival through their viewfinder. *There I was, with a perfect view of the Burn, when this one-eyed shit suddenly got in the way.*

Plastic buddy
The stinky plastic bag of garbage that you drive out of the desert with come Monday morning. *My campmates had a plastic buddy so big, it sat between the us the whole way to the Lockwood dump.*

Playa brownies
The hard crust that forms on the still-moist muddy areas of the playa. So named due to the distinct feeling that one is walking on brownies. *Some assholes from Reno tried to gate crash, and their truck stuck in the playa brownies.*

Rogue boner
Any annoying, horny guy loose on the playa. *Maybe it's the Viagra or something, but there seem to be a lot of rogue boners here this year.*

Speedballing
Trying to reach orgasm through sexual intercourse before dying of heat exhaustion. *Honey, let's not fuck during the day anymore. This tent is too hot, and I'm sick of speedballing.*

Tourist
Derogatory term for anyone who is obviously a spectator, i.e. obsessive picture-takers, yahoos asking where the beer tent is, and other people who don't get it. *We saw these tourists driving around the playa, asking where the RV hook-ups were.*

Troll
Drunken, unintelligent life form. Often leaves trail of beer cans. *Back in '96, the playa was crawling with trolls!*

— compiled by Bryan Finch, Charles Lucas, and Swirly Rat Jr.

I remember when...

... there were only 600 people here but it seemed like more of them were naked.

... they only cleaned the porta-potties once during the whole weekend.

... you could drive in Black Rock City.

... Flash would have to give away hamburgers at McSatan's in order for people to eat them.

.... you could bring weapons to Burning Man, and use them... safely, of course.

... when the fire lingam was only one eight-foot tower, and actually seemed quite dangerous.

... that cool espresso truck from Davis, California came to Burning Man.

... people placed sexually-explicit personal ads on the bulletin board in Central Camp.

... Rave Camp consisted of only two cars and a sound system.

... when Black Rock City was still a one-newspaper town.

... you could actually get a cocktail at the Cacophony Cocktail Party.

... Burning Man parties in San Francisco only happened once a year, instead of once a week.

— compiled by Stewart McKenzie, Adrian Roberts, and the Space Cowgirls

Things we'd like to see next year at Burning Man

fewer people
homeless people
Black Rock City's very own ISP
a karaoke bar
a Media-Free Zone, about ten miles wide
less naked people
another newspaper to compete with *Piss Clear* and the *Black Rock Gazette*
more porta-potties
Black Rock City Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Pride Parade and Celebration
the triumphant return of Rave Camp
reserved seating for the Burn
a really, really big storm

— compiled by Adrian Roberts and Swirly Rat Jr.

Bands we'd like to see at Burning Man

Atari Teenage Riot
Bel Canto
Blue Period
Crystal Method
EBN
Godflesh
Huun-Huur-Tu
Marilyn Manson
Lee "Scratch" Perry
Psychotica
Rasputina
S.O.D.
Secret Chiefs 3
The Three Tenors
Venom
Whitehouse

— list compiled by Gxeoxchi, Bryan Finch, and Adrian Roberts

our first annual best of black rock city

Now really, what sort of alternative newspaper would we be if we didn't have a "Best of..." issue? It's an alternative press cliché!

Since arriving here in Black Rock City, we've been combing the streets and hanging out in theme camps, discovering a few of the best things that make Black Rock City culture so much fun. Some of the 28 things listed here will seem obvious; others are a bit off the beaten path. Either way, we hope you enjoy this list as much as we had fun putting it together. So without further ado, we're proud to present our very first annual "Best of Black Rock City."

PLACES

BEST PLACE TO GET A GRILLED CHEESE SANDWICH AT 4 A.M.

The closest thing Black Rock City's got to a 24-7 lounge, **Bianca's Smut Shack** is that, and so much more. Bianca's is a full-on party spot, with far and away the most gracious hosts on the playa. These people know how to throw a party. They're so friendly and loving, and just being there will just fill you with enough warm fuzzies to get you through a cold Black Rock night. After all, Bianca loves you!

There are always interesting people hanging out there, lounging on one of the comfy couches, or flipping through one of porno mags laying around. To be honest, there usually isn't anything all *that* smutty going on, unless you consider the multitude of good vibes and friendly flirting that goes on to be particularly smutty.

And oh yes, those grilled cheese sandwiches. They're simply the best on the playa, a Bianca trademark. Come for the grilled cheese, stay for the love.

Adrian Roberts

BEST LAWN ON THE PLAYA

Incongruities abound on the playa, but for our money, nothing beats the sight of a lush green lawn spread on parched, barren earth in a neat rectangle. Top it off with some brightly painted balls rolling through arched wickets and a few lunatics waving wooden mallets around, and you've got some kinda sport. Croquet, to be exact.

Eileen Hoyt's **Croquet Lawn at Fandango! camp** (above) evokes much emotional responses from passerby. You'll want to touch it. "Is it real?" you'll ask wide-eyed, bending over to ruffle the blades of grass with your fingers, to prove it to yourself. "Can I water it?" you'll ask. Sure, go ahead, water Eileen's lawn. But don't think it'll make her hesitate if she has the opportunity to knock your ball into the next county.

BEST ALUMINUM RECYCLING

It's about damn time Black Rock City started recycling, and nobody does it better than the denizens of **Devil's Dozen Recycle Camp.** Putting the 'cycle' back into 'recycling,' these are the people who have been swarming around the city on their Insectomobiles, collecting aluminum cans to melt and cast into those weird bicycle racks you seen popping up. Bring your cans and other aluminum items to their camp for a truly smashing experience! Be warned though: they only accept aluminum. Anyone trying to unload any non-aluminum recyclables will have to deal with a Devil's Advocate, who may effect irreparable damage to their souls.

BEST PLACE TO SCORE DRUGS

If you thought that Burning Man would be an easy place to score drugs, chances are, you thought wrong. Oh sure, there are people selling in Black Rock City—at inflated prices. Besides, who wants to spend their weekend here trying to find drugs? Hopefully, you do what we did, and that's stockpile in **San Francisco** first, before coming out here.

BEST PLACE TO SEE THE MAN BURN

Unless you're part of the elite crew who built **Tower Camp** you can pretty much forget about scoring the best seats in the house for viewing the Burn on Sunday night. Hang out on the playa floor with the rest of the plebes, and gaze longingly at Tower Camp off in the distance. Oh well.

BEST PLACE TO PICK SOMEONE UP

Café Temps Perdu? Bianca's Smut Shack? The Center Camp Bulletin Board?

Nope. The best place to pick someone up in Black Rock City is **standing in line for the porta-potties.** Start practicing your pick-up lines now: "Hey baby, come here often?" or "God damn, these porta-potties fucking stink!"

Stewart McKenzie

BEST PLACE TO MAKE A CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTION TO WHITE TRASH NEVADA KIDS

Many people know that the **public landfill at Lockwood** (above), right off I-80 on the way to Reno, is one of the best places to dump all your post-Burning Man garbage. What they don't know though, is that there is also a dumpster there, where one can toss in assorted toys, games, books, whatever, which are then donated to children throughout the local area. I still cherish the thought that some cool kid in Nevada is tooling around his or her neighborhood on the fuzzy yellow fake-fur bicycle I dumped there two years ago.

BEST PLACE TO GET LAID

Not saying that you're actually going to be able to accomplish this or not, but certainly bumping uglies in the **haystack room underneath the Burning Man** would give you some richly-deserved hipster cred points, not to mention providing you with a scintillating topic of conversation at cocktail parties across the playa. Just don't try this on Sunday night, okay?

BEST PLACE TO SOAK YOUR FEET AND GET A MANICURE

Highly recommended by the Space Cowgirls, **Camp Camp Village Quarter's Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence** reportedly give the best manicures on the playa. These are some of the most gracious nuns we've ever met, and anyone who offers you a cool beer and a foot bath, along with a stunningly wide selection of nail color, is a friend of ours!

BEST EMERGENCY MAKE-OVER

You've got it hand it to those queens over at **M*A*S*H*cara** (Atlantic at South 5th). The Ladies Militia Forced Aid Camp are outfitted with the largest arsenal of make-up on the playa, and they mean business! If you find yourself in need of make-up aid, these queens might be able to help. Then again, maybe not. As Private Nambla the Clown (above) says, "In the grand Burning Man tradition, M*A*S*H*-cara is ground zero for great ideas executed poorly." Be on the lookout for their rumored drag queen take-over of Bianca's Smut Shack on Sunday before the Burn!

Marc Geller

SHOWS

BEST THEATRICAL PRODUCTION

It's huge, it's epic, it's got a cast of hundreds, a great score, and a set that burns. Who cares if it makes no sense? Now in it's third year as a full-scale theatrical production, sculptor **Pepe Ozan's annual fire lingam opera** rivals even the burning of the Man himself. This year's opera, *The Temple of Rudra,* to be performed tonight at midnight, promises to be even bigger and better than last year's.

BEST PLACE TO SEE SOMETHING YOU'RE NOT QUITE SURE WAS FOR REAL THE NEXT DAY

For your money—in other words, none—the **Fandango! Stumble-In Theatre** (Village Way South 3rd) provides you with the best rest stop on the road to nirvana. Every night around midnight, they present on their big screen a short film festival of the weird and sublime. You never know quite *what* you're going to see. That's the beauty of it. Not a bad place to chill out while you're trying to come down off whatever drugs you happen to be on. And if you have a short film or video that you'd like screened, by all means bring it by.

BEST LOCAL HOMEGROWN SPORT

Where else but in Black Rock City can you watch a bunch of drunken idiots burn themselves while kicking and throwing a flaming ball of fire all over the place? We lamented its absence last year, but thankfully, **Fireball** returned to the playa this past Thursday. If you missed the classic battle between Shirts and Skins, you'll just have to wait until next year...

BEST PLACE TO SHOWCASE YOUR "TALENT" WHILE DRUNK

Unveil your fabulousness to your friends and co-campers at **Kimba's Spotlight.** Emcee Kimba Cravemore (right) hosts an open, nightly invitation to your inner celebrity. Sets, costumes, music, props, inspiration, and occasional scorn await you under the blaze of the Big Bright Spot in the Bleu Light District. If you missed last night's bizarre showcase of so-called "talent," then you should drop by tonight at 8 pm. Get up on stage and show 'em your stuff!

BEVERAGES

BEST COFFEE

For that early morning java jolt, where else are you going to go? The **Café Temps Perdu,** run by the fabulous Miss P, is *the* place. With over 10,000 cups served, how can you go wrong? Not only that, it has a reputation around town as one the best places in the city to pick someone up!

BEST BAR-HOPPING ON THE PLAYA

Look, you can go wandering all over the playa looking for booze. Or, you can simply go to the **NeighBarhood,** your one-stop shopping for all your alcoholic needs. With over a dozen different bars, there's something for everyone. Well, except a 12-Step Program. Just be sure to bring something to barter—ice, liquor, mixers, sexual favors, whatever—otherwise the bartenders *will* get a tad testy. As they say here, "Drink more, worry less!"

BEST DRINK IN AN AMBIENT ATMOSPHERE

Just imagine... chai tea and aerobics with a techno backbeat. Head on over to the **Nub Circus.** For several years, these Santa Cruz locals have been serving up the most groovalicious drinks in the desert. Plus, they've created one of the most comfy spaces on the playa, with great chai tea, incredible atmosphere, and friendly service.

BEST BLENDER DRINKS ON THE PLAYA

For those suffering Tiki Camp withdrawal, **Chez Newt's Slow Toxic Amphibian Lounge,** located in the NeighBARhood, will offer you that little slice of the tropics that you've been craving. Wear a mumu or at least a lei, and bring something to barter: a bottle of rum, tequila, triple sec, cream de coco, ice, frozen strawberries, limes, bananas, pineapple juice, margarita mix, Midori, or any other assorted blendable fruits. If you have nothing to barter, you might be able to score free drinks by doing menial labor, like doing dishes and filling tiki torches.

BEST MOBILE BAR

Have you seen that living room driving by? That may have been **Pepper Mouser,** the man with the traveling living room. Pepper and his team outdid themselves this year with their new-and-improved version of last year's model. Wild leopard prints, zebra stripes, velveteen Lazy Boys, and blender drinks... all on wheels!

CULTURE

BEST RADIO STATION

Work music, trip music, dance music, sex music, sleep music, non-sleep music, it's all there, in a fantastic, eclectic mix of tunes. **Disturbia Radio Broadcasting's KFRK (K-Freak) 107.7** is our favorite radio station out here on the playa, and we're not just saying that 'cause *Piss Clear* happens to be in Disturbia! As they say, it really is "where the freaks get their beats."

BEST WAY TO BE OBSESSIVE/COMPULSIVE/ANAL-RETENTIVE

If you the kind of person who needs some rational, itemized method for knowing that you're getting the most out of the Burning Man festival, then you *must* **pick up a passport from the Artists' Republic of Fremont.** That way, you can obsessively visit each and every single one of the 414 (or so) theme camps, in order to get your passport stamped. If a theme camp doesn't have a stamp, be sure to throw a fit. Don't stop until they finally—somehow—stamp your passport. At the end of the weekend, after you've got all 414 stamps, you'll feel good that you accomplished so much at Burning Man.

BEST DELIVERY SERVICE

Although they're starting to get some competition from Penfold the Postman of the Playa, along with young upstarts FedUp, we think the Portland Cacophony Society's **Disgruntled Postal Workers** still rule! Hell, they've been distributing *Piss Clear* for us since our first issue, way back in '96. Besides, we're afraid of what they'd do if we didn't put them on this list!

BEST USE OF YOUR BLACK ROCK CITY TAX DOLLARS

God damn if that **Nebulous Entity** thing isn't impressive. And it better fucking be, considering that part of your admission ticket went to pay for it. Still, aren't you glad that your hard-earned cash helped to pay for such a cool piece of performance art? It was either that, or the money could have gone to pay for more porta-potties, and really, does Black Rock City need anymore porta-potties?

BEST WAY TO ATTRACT MEDIA ATTENTION

Not to overgeneralize here, but have you ever noticed the sort of person who's usually behind a professional video-camera? That's why **engaging in displays of PG-13-rated faux lesbian acts, while looking like a hot-and-bothered sex industry worker** attracts the media faster than flies on shit. Try it, you'll see.

Adrian Roberts

BEST WAY TO WASTE SEVERAL HOURS EACH DAY

It's the middle of the day. It's too hot to nap, but too hot to do much moving around either. You're bored. You're restless. You've got some time to kill. So grab your hat, water, and sunblock, and head on down to the **Central Camp Bulletin Board** (above). There, you can easily spend the next several hours—or days—reading all the shit people have posted there.

BEST BURNING MAN WEB SITE

Oh sure, you can get all the important BM info you *really* need at www.burningman.com. And of course, there's www.blueperiod.com/pissclear. But for all the important BM info that you had *no idea* you even needed, go to **Seth Maxwell's Burning Man FAQ page at http://malice.org/burn.html.** Seethingly, hysterically cynical, it also includes a link to the equally brilliant Lawyer's Guide to Burning Man.

BEST BURNING MAN SOUND BITES

"It's Disneyland in reverse." "You can plan a society, but you can't plan a culture." "It's art that generates society." One thing's for sure: you can always count on **Larry Harvey** to give good sound bite. And considering he started this whole mess, he better. It's no wonder the media loves him.

BEST PLACE TO PISS CLEAR

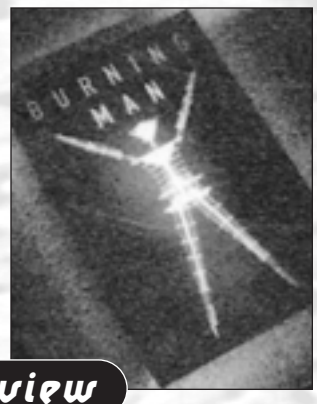
Look, if all you have to do is pee, why stand in line just for the privilege of being in a stinky, smelly, porta-potty? Hop on your bike and pedal your way out into **the middle of the playa.** Then let it loose. Don't worry, the little bit of mud you create will dry up in about five minutes. Besides, this is by far the easiest way to tell if you're pissing clear.

WHAT'S OUT / WHAT'S IN

WHAT'S OUT	WHAT'S IN
baby oil	SPF 15 glitter sunscreen
beer	water
bicycles	golf carts
glowsticks and bike lights	body glitter and silver shit
body piercings	nipple clamps
camcorders	lasers to fuck up camcorders
clean, dust-free air	dirty, dust-filled air
cock rings in public	full leather harnesses
cocktails	water
community and art	fucking and killing
Sheriff patrol every hour	Medevac every hour
dresses	frocks
fireworks, acetylene bombs	burning steel wool
full nudity	saucy, revealing costumes
horse cocks	nice cock-to-ball ratio
Idiot Flesh	BM Marching Band
inverted nipples	substantial thighs
mincing	flouncing
old schoolbuses	station wagons
"Om namai Rudra"	"Show us your tits!"
Quiet Zone	Car Alarm Camp
Radio Free Burning Man	Analog DIOX
running through fires	biking through fires
sex with your loved one	sex with strangers
techno babble	techno music
Trader Joe's	Smart and Final
wastoids	loadies
water misters	vodka misters
www.burningman.com	www.zpub.com/burn
your mama	my mama

— list by Tom Canaday, Clamdip Orgy, Mike Connor, Adrian Roberts, and the New Mood Playa campers

High school yearbook for freaks *by ADRIAN ROBERTS*



book review

Burning Man, *edited by Brad Wieners, designed by John Plunkett. HardWired Books, 1997.*

Yeah, yeah, I know. This book actually came out well over a year ago. But you see, being the jaded cynic that I am, the last thing I wanted to do was take part in the impending commercialization of Burning Man by actually purchasing a copy of this beautiful, $27.95 book. Let's face it, when they start making coffee table books about a really cool, artsy, ostensibly underground, non-commercial event, you know the writing's on the wall for said event's hip quotient.

So needless to say, I had a real negative reaction to the *Burning Man* book before I even *looked* at it. I was opposed to its existence purely on principal. "*Wired* is trying to make money off of Burning Man," I thought, incredulous. And the Burning Man Project actually approved!

Many months after the book's release, after all the hubbub had died down, I decided to sneak a peek at it during a Burning Man party. I must admit, I was immediately suckered in. It's *gorgeous*. Stunning really. Beautifully designed, with huge, full-bleed photos—both color and black-and-white—on every page. I immediately bought one.

Flipping through the book, there seems to be a good representative sampling of Black Rock City culture throughout the years: Cliched images of naked, painted bodies dancing. That goddamned Java Cow. Art cars. Colorfully-costumed participants. Moody black-and-whites of the Man. The usual pics of naked people caked with mud. It's even presented in somewhat of an order, with all the daytime images slowly leading into photos taken at dusk. Then there's the requisite sixteen pages of editorial pontificating, before heading off into the book's "climax," which mirrors the climax of the event itself with its final eighteen photos all taken during Burn night.

The images, for the most part, are stunning—although anyone can tell you that it seems damn near impossible to take a *bad* photo out here on the playa. I especially liked Barbara Traub's very artful, often-posed, black-and-whites. Instead of merely documenting the event, she seems to use the playa as her own photography studio, producing incredibly unique images.

As for the editorial content, it makes for a good, hour-long read. Naturally, everyone tries to explain what Burning Man is, without ever really nailing it down. Such is the nature of the event. Larry Harvey spells it all out in his oral history of Burning Man. Bruce Sterling describes his family's vacation at Burning Man, in his hysterical, and ultimately heartwarming piece, "Variation On a Theme Park (Taking the Kids to Burning Man)" Erik Davis' "Here is Post-Modern Space" is alternately intellectual jabbering and snarky commentary. Hell, he even references *Piss Clear* in his article—although not by name—describing us as an "otherwise lame Burning Man zine." Hey, come on Erik! That was three years ago! What do you think of us now?

But far and away my favorite piece was "Me, I Didn't Burn A Thing," a refreshingly different perspective of Burning Man from Janelle Brown. She tells it like it is, writing: "I'm stuck in a limbo-land of exhaustion: I can't sleep because I've hardly moved all day, and I can't move because I've hardly slept. I lie in the eerie blue shade of our plastic tarpaulin in a semi-lucid state, spray bottle in one hand, gin and tonic in the other." That is *so* it.

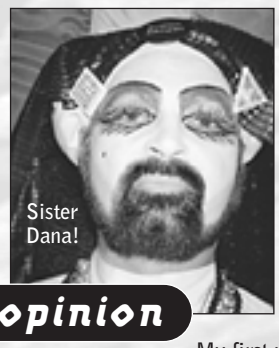
While certainly it's a great conversation piece for suckering in friends to go out with you to Burning Man next year, the biggest reason I like the book is because it functions as sort of a high school yearbook for freaks. "Look, there I am on page 11, in the reddish orange wrap!" "There's my friend Ggreg, in a big double spread on pages 72-73!" "And look, on page 111, there's the "Flaming Man" we helped our friend Scott build back in '95!"

Cynicism aside, it really is a gorgeous book—and I'm not just saying that because my name got printed in a long list near the back. Believe it or not, it really is worth the $27.95.

Gay ghetto in Black Rock City? *by SISTER DANA VAN IQUITY, LSS (Licensed Shit Stirrer)*

Editor's note: As a BM veteran, it seemed ridiculous to me when suddenly, out of nowhere two years ago, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence showed up, ultimately creating a theme camp that they proclaimed was a "safe-ish space for queers." Uh, I thought that all of Black Rock City was a safe-ish space for queers. I mean, I'm queer, and part of the appeal of Burning Man was that out here, nobody gave a toss.

I have nothing against the Sisters, but at the time, I thought that by creating a "queer camp," the Sisters were being rather exclusionary, creating in effect a gay ghetto. Confessing these sinful thoughts to Sister Dana Van Iquity, I asked him to write something on why Black Rock City needs queer visibility and awareness. This is his reply...



Dennis McMillan

opinion

Why in the world do we need Camp Camp Village Quarter, well known as a safe-ish space for queers, at this lovable love-fest we call Burning Man? Well, I could answer that in two different ways. Here's the first:

Because we need to feel safe from all those scary, hopped-up hets and flipped-out frat-boys who find a special, perverted joy in harassing homos. Get a few beers under their belt and these bad bozos are suddenly on the prowl for fags. And while they may not actually physically bash their targets like they would on their home turf, they may feel free to inflict verbal bashing, and to make a queer feel unsafe and unwelcome in a place where he or she expected to find a kind of nirvana or utopia. That would be one answer.

And it would be totally exaggerating to the extreme, because Burning Man *is*, for the most part, a safe space for *everyone*—queers, freaks, geeks, and yes, even Republicans. I just wrote that second paragraph with the unabashed and purposeful intention of inciting a whole lotta incendiary comments about my supposed blatant homo-centrism (which this nun does *not* have, "bi" the way).

Yes, I confess—my dear PC (that's *Piss Clear*, not Politically Correct) editor Adrian asked me to write something controversial—and *damn* but I do love some of that there controversy! So I decided with malice and forethought to open with that particularly inflammatory paragraph—but nevertheless, there is some truth to it. Read on, dear reader. The plot sickens.

My first year at Burning Man was a time of total uncertainty. Who else would be there? Would they accept guys running around in nun's habits? Would there be homophobia?

First question: all kinds of way kewl people were there. Second question: yes, for the most part, everyone got off on the nun drag. Third question: yes, some.

My first year *(one of The Dark Years, see Adrian's Rant, this issue — Ed.)* my queer pals and I *did* encounter little fag-bashy verbal assaults and felt a bit uncomfortable at times. Once, a beer can was hurled at me. I wouldn't mind if it were full, but they were *not* offering me a free cocktail.

So, having experienced that bit of unpleasant anti-gay stuff, and having heard from fellow fags and dykes that they also noticed some homophobia, we decided the following year to set up a special area, Camp Camp, where queers and their friends could have a haven away from all that creepy crap. And as it turned out, we ran into absolutely no homophobia at all last year, so Camp Camp simply turned into a great spot to entertain friends, gay and non-gay, alike.

This year, so many people requested Camp Camp again that we had to give in. And it's not a gay ghetto at all—there are many hetty hotties camping with us too, just because they enjoy our twisted humor. Camp Camp is a place where family can gather—and "family" can be interpreted any way you want. After all, in a city of over 10,000 occupants you can't expect to be welcome in all quarters.

Is there a need for special camps? Well, *duh!* Burning Man is all about various camps and their special themes. I have heard that there is a Smoking Lounge Camp, where you can only be there if you are puffing on a ciggie. There is probably a Vegan Camp, where herbivores can gather far from the stench of carnivores. It's not necessarily a bad thing to clump together people with common interests. For instance, I will be on the lookout for S&M Camp, if it exists. Is there a Naked Camp where clothing is *not* optional? There's a Clean & Sober Camp, where I am certainly *not* welcome. But *everyone* is welcome at Camp Camp, especially if they're carrying liquor! Just don't be offended by the queen screams and nellie spells that will be occurring there with frequency. Stop by and visit, and flame on!

Post-Playa Syndrome: what to expect, how to cope *by HURRICANE LINDA*

mental health

If this is your first year at Burning Man, it must seem pretty amazing, huh? But let me warn you: the Burning Man experience doesn't necessarily end here on the playa. There's a distinct set of symptoms known to hit Newbies after they leave the Burning Man festival, known as Post-Playa Syndrome.

Actually, the syndrome is not merely limited to first-timers. However, those experienced with PPS are usually better able to cope with it. Knowing what to expect is key, so don't be caught by surprise if you experience the following stages of Post-Playa Syndrome:

STAGE ONE: You're home. You've taken that first bath, had that first uninterrupted eight hours of sleep, pumiced the feet, lotioned the sunburn. There's a blissful afterglow, and a feeling of pride that you chose the best possible way to spend your Labor Day weekend. Enjoy it while you can.

STAGE TWO: Back to the grind. Depending on your work environment, you may find it difficult, or even totally disallowable, to accurately answer your co-worker's inane "Did you have a nice weekend?" queries. You may also find yourself steeped in superiority when listening to insipid chatter about the picnics, television, and consumerism they occupied themselves with while you were on the playa, living a life that they couldn't possibly visualize.

Another thing to be conscious of during Stage Two: Try to bear in mind that it is no longer okay to strip naked in public, no matter how hot it is.

STAGE THREE: All of us have friends and family members that didn't or couldn't get out here to Black Rock City. If these people are patient and understanding, they will not berate you for your inability to stop uttering "Burning Man" for periods of greater than five minutes. Be patient with them too, and realize that, as difficult as it may be to believe, after six months of hearing your incessant yammering, they may actually consider the topic boring. It's impossible at this stage to stop talking, thinking, and dreaming about Burning Man, so the only real solution is to spend as much time as possible with sympathetic parties, i.e. your fellow Burning Nerds. More than likely, there are a few in your hometown, and this is the time when those internet BM bulletin boards come in handy.

STAGE FOUR. By this stage, there will be a few 24-hour periods where you actually manage *not* to talk about Burning Man to everyone you meet. However, you'll still find it difficult to resist asking, "Have you ever heard of Burning Man?" to anyone you meet who seems like they may be sympathetic.

STAGE FIVE. Six months have gone by. Finally, you've made it past the halfway point to next year's Burn! Now is the time to start those free-for-all brainstorming sessions with your campmates. Yes, you've got to make everything bigger and better than last year. Go wild, and let your imagination run free — don't worry, you'll downsize all your "brilliant" ideas in Stage Six.

Also, now is the time to realize that it's not always going to be possible to convince others to commit to going, no matter how sure you are that they'll enjoy it. If they know you, they've heard of Burning Man; the rest is up to them. The best that you can do is point them to http://www.burningman.com and hope that they'll see the light.

STAGE SIX: Now you can legitimately feel that you aren't being silly in beginning earnest preparations for the next Burn. But it's during this stage that you may have to come to grips with the fact that you aren't *really* going to build a full-scale replica of the village from *The Prisoner,* or learn to juggle six chainsaws while firebreathing by Labor Day. That's okay. Just take the one really great idea you think you can accomplish, and get to work on it.

STAGE SEVEN. Welcome. You are now a seasoned Burning Man veteran and Newbies will come to you for advice. It's up to you to choose which attitude to adopt: the cynical "It ain't what it used to be" 'tude, the patronizing "Oh, you silly Newbies" posture, or the loving "Welcome all!" pose.

Although it may be difficult to deal with at times, Post-Playa Syndrome is manageable. Good luck, and see you next year.

haiku *by GAVIN HECK*

Burn expectations
Come have your heart,
soul, and mind
Sun-burned wide open

My head is on fire
Piss clear, over here, on me
Put me out again

This old thing? My head?
It loves fire, starting again
Laughing in mirrors

"What's fire?" What's
burning?
Not to your culture, to you
What does your heart say?

Piss here or piss there
Thousand years it
won't matter
But today it will.

This old thing? My heart?
It loves to burn,
this stinging
Falling to its knees

Another picture
Another tit, that's the shit!
Observers Go Home

Give time to the rain
That isn't falling out there
But here in your heart

Seventeen ways to seriously fuck your life up at Burning Man

by DRUE MILLER

Develop skin cancer on over 85% of your body despite buying 45 SPF sunblock—you're too baked to put it on.

Contract Hepatitis A by eating unwashed strawberries offered to you by some cute, naked girl.

Chain yourself to the Man on Sunday afternoon, in a misguided political act symbolizing unity of all beings everywhere. Stay for the fireworks. (Alternate method: Tape self-igniting fireworks to your limbs at Camp Be-The-Man.

Tell your campmates to "Chill out, dudes," when they discover you pouring the last five gallons of water over yourself in an effort to cool off.

Drink the contents of two dozen glowsticks, in an effort to prove to your friends that they really are "non-toxic."

Camp Kevorkian.

Accept the glass of water offered to you at Camp Cholera.

Sign up for "Viagrathon" at the Midlife Crisis Camp.

Volunteer to help out with the midnight mystery performance art at Camp Angioplasty.

Accidentally fall into a solar pit fire after taking a powerful muscle relaxant.

Run pirate radio station K-ICE. Play Vanilla Ice recordings non-stop.

Announce that Rave Camp will happen this year, and give directions to your camp. When ravers appear, play nothing but Madonna's Ray of Light album over and over and ...

Attempt to dig an underground tunnel from Black Rock to Gerlach at Camp Chunnel.

Take your brand-new, high-end video rig to the Burn on Sunday night. Boast loudly about the excellent footage you're going to get. Yell, "Get the fuck outta my way!" at anybody who wanders in front of your lens.

When pulled over for speeding along Route 447, ask the officer if you can check out his gun while he's writing you up a ticket.

When you're going through the agriculture checkpoint at the California border, tell the inspectors that you don't have any produce in the car, "except for these mushrooms."

On Tuesday, wake up late and rush to take Muni, to get to your job at an investment brokerage in the Financial District — without showering or changing out of your sarong.